Early Settlers, Founding Of Pocahontas

By SHIRLEY DONNELLY

Long for it been in my heart to tell you about Pocahontas County of West Virginia. This is one of West Virginia's 55 counties which is getting pretty well along in its years.

In 1821 was created the county — created it out of Bath, Pendleton, and Randolph counties of what was then Virginia. It's one of our largest counties when it comes to area, having 942.81 square miles. It compares favorably with Randolph's 1040.34 square miles and stacks up right well with Greenbrier's 1,022.8 square miles, these two being West Virginia's most extensive shires.

They named Pocahontas after the Indian princess of ever Jamestown way.

I like to put two and two together sometimes and the record book of Queen Elizabeth II of England by Jamestown helped me do it. Pocahontas was the daughter of Chief Powhatan. One day in the year 1613 Capt. Samuel Argall was on a voyage up the Potomac when he heard of this attractive Indian princess. An Indian trader was given a copper kettle to entice her on to the vessel. She was then turned to be married to Jamestown, then a struggling, scruffy little settlement which was planted six years before. This was a plain case of kidnapping.

There at Jamestown one of the settlers was John Rolfe. He was single and became so smitten with the beauty and manners of the Indian girl that he turned on all his charm, vintage and won her to himself to be his wife. When the Church of England rites of marriage were performed in April, 1613 there was great rumo and acclaim in the celebration that followed. This is the same girl who was reputed to have saved the life of Capt. John Smith when he was about to be subdivided with savage war clubs, or words to that effect. In 1616 Rolfe took Pocahontas to England to show her off but Pocahontas was not too happy over it all. She was introduced to Queen Anne. On preparing to return to our native land—Virginia—the 21-year-old Indian princess came down with small pox and died. Today the name of Pocahontas is perpetuated in our big county's name and other places, too.

FIRST WHITE MEN to settle in Pocahontas County were Jacob Marsh and Stephen Sewell. It was in 1749 they reached the mouth of Knapps Creek and erected a cabin on the banks of the Greenbrier River. Subsequently they left, not in an argument over religion and one of them carved into a willow tree.

Sewell later married some 40 miles west where Indians killed him. His home is kept alive in the Big Sewell Mountain range which bears his name. Big Sewell Mountain in Fayette County is the highest point on the Midland Trail (U. S. Route 60). Sewell was killed in Kentucky, 1758.

When Sewell and Marsh settled at present day Marlinton they established the oldest settlement on western waters in West Virginia.

When Pocahontas was formed Huntersville was made the county seat. Dollars came hundred in trade prize, and gunning, and other things from the trading post was the maintenance of holiness the place naturally was given the name of Huntersville. Over 60 years ago the county seat at Lewisburg was transferred to Marlinton where it is to the day.

SECOND KNOWN WHITE MEN on the Greenbrier River were John Lewis and his son Andrew. They came into the wilds of Pocahontas as agents and surveyors for the Greenbrier Land Company, to secure the British Crown land grant of 160,000 acres of land to be located in the Greenbrier Valley. This was the time John Lewis got tangled up in a thicket of grapevines which covered the valley and since he would always afterwards tell the chosen spot where he was surveying lands, "The Grapevine". That name stuck. John Lewis was the first white to carry a compass into the Greenbrier Valley.

Greenbrier River rises in Pocahontas County and runs in a northwestern direction, crossing the county in half. It and the Elk are the largest rivers entirely within the state. The Greenbrier flows into New River at Ballengee in Summers County, 178 miles from its source. Andrew Lewis, son of John Lewis, in the room for whom Lewisburg is named, he conquered Cornstalk of Point Pleasant on Monday, Oct. 10, 1774, in the final battle of the American Revolution.

ANOTHER EARLY PIONEER in Pocahontas was Col. John McNeil. He was the first actual settler at what was called the Little Levels. He was born near Winchester, Va., but migrated to Cumberland Valley in Maryland. There he got into a fight with another fellow and thought he had killed his antagonist. Scott was he but the trail, creating himself a fugitive from justice.

One day he came to Little Levels, in about the year 1780. While hunting he came upon two white frontiersmen, Charles and James Kennison, in search of a spot to settle. From them McNeil learned that the man he had fought was not dead, nor was he injured overly much. He went back east of the mountains with the Kennisons. There he married Martha Davis, a woman of Welch ancestry, having been born in Wales in 1748.

They came back to Little Levels and there McNeil built a log meeting house as a house of worship. It was called the White Deer Church, being one of the earliest churches west of the Alleghanies maybe the very oldest.

McNeil joined Andrew Lewis's Army and fought in the Point Pleasant battle. While McNeil was away on the Point Pleasant campaign his infant child died. Alone in the wilderness Mrs. John McNeil, nee Martha Davis, fashioned a crude coffin, dug a grave, and buried her babe herself.

Hard by Hillsboro in Pocahontas is the quaint cemetery where Mr. and Mrs. John McNeil are buried. There, too, lie Charles and Edward Kennison and their wives and other heroes of the Big Shawnee battle at Point Pleasant. One of God's days I plan to go to Hillsboro to roam a bit.

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Buchannon was settled by the two Pringle brothers who were army deserters from Fort Pitt. It never pays to trace one's family back too gothamitly far, does it? More of Pocahontas, some bi-murrow.

By SHIRLEY DONNELLY

When time and space for me in the remainder, I was writing you about the brave men of Pocahontas County who took their lot with the Blues and Gays in the four years of slaughtering from 1861 to 1865.

A notable family of Pocahontas was the McNeel family. One of them was William Lamb McNeel.

He was born near Hillsboro on May 14, 1826. He was the son of Margaret and Mathew Kelly McNeel, and a grandson of John McNeel, who came to this country about the year 1770. That ancestor, John McNeel, built the first brick house that ever stood on the site of Pocahontas County.

On Oct. 31, 1850, William Lamb McNeel and his sister Jane Beard were married, she was the daughter of Joseph and Martha Beard. Eleven children were born to this union, albeit Margaret Jane Beard died Oct. 6, 1872, having been born Oct. 31, 1850.

In spite of the fact he had a family given the "right of way" exempted in 1861, William Lamb McNeel felt more bound to follow the state of Virginia which gave him birth. During the last three years of the Civil War he was a captain of Co. "F" of the 20th Virginia Cavalry. In return for forfeiting his life in battle, fame on the field of honor, the citizens of Pocahontas elected McNeel their sheriff in 1865 for a four year term. They later sent him to the state Legislature first as a delegate and then as a state senator. He was a man his assignment would track but his conscience fearlessly and carefully raised and sprayed angles in the deed. He was an honored Confederate soldier when the Lord called him from his labors.

HARKEN to the threadbare story of Franklin Andrew Beatch. This man and Pocahontas antecedents.

On the first of July, 1861, this man had to cause the Confederate Army or commit a substitute. For some reason he elected to hire a substitute in the stead. Not all men relish the field, you know. Then it came to pass the substitute law was repealed.

Result of this emergency action of the Confederate government was that, in April, 1864, this man Beatch found himself two soldiers in one service, Company "E", 14th Virginia Cavalry. So he served dual the stream of war ceased to throb and the flags of battle were furled. But fate caught up with him and the real Franklin Andrew Beatch was captured as a prisoner of war on Sept. 8, 1864.

He was carried off to Camp Chase, Ohio, where he was confined until March 17, 1865. Then it was war the ravages of disease and starvation compelled him to take the oath of allegiance. He was released and sent home, just about half dead. He saw much of the corruption that obtained in that awful period. He used to tell how he saw federal government food and medicines that were never allowed to reach their destination. He saw how federal officers could be bribed into letting prisoners escape for a price, or have their exchange cancelled just for a handful of silver.

It was his opinion that letting the men starve and perish from disease was the best way of getting rid of the valuable veterans there confined by the Washington government. He was bitter as gall over the whole thing, and who could blame him?

On the end of the war and what to wear in line for new employment, this man Beatch found himself in Pocahontas, but this man Beatch was not where he was born, but he at his native county, having settled in Monterville in the early period. He married and his children were registering here when he was a big youth.

Circuit Clerk Hunt Sale, here is what I want to have for you for Author D. Dennis of Oak Hill, author of the drawing, Dr. Harry A. Dennis, the big historical monograph

EVEN DOCTORS of medicine went to war in those days. One such subject was Dr. Cyrus P. Bryan. Folks, an account McClintock will be able to detail the record their grandmothers told them about this man in search. There's where he returned to practice his profession in 1870. Dr. Bryan was a graduate of the Jefferson Medical College in the class of 1858.

During the war Dr. Bryan dropped his medical practice and served as a soldier-surgeon for fellow Virginians. He was with the Bath County, Va., Cavalry. He acted as surgeon of the military post at Warm Springs, Va., in the fall and winter of 1862. From July 1, 1863, to April 9, 1865, he sat in the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Virginia Assembly.

WHAT OF THE MINISTERS of Pocahontas during the Civil War? Well, to start out with, Webb and several I many of them.

One I know about was the Rev. George Preston Moore. His parents were both born in Pocahontas but died in Iowa, where the tall corn grows, to hear Lorenzo tell it. Reverend Moore was twice married, his second wife was born June 30, 1844 and her marriage anniversary was the day of her birth, in 1861. She was Ruth J. Gay. His first wife was Elizabeth M. Poage.

Reverend Moore was not one to discount short. All who he was spent within a quarter of a mile of where he was born. He did not take part in the Civil War but did act as quartermaster agent at Edray. He was chosen to many public offices in his home county of Pocahontas, Long was he postmaster at Edray and for some time he was justice of the peace.

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JOHN McNEEL'S settling Little Levels, fancying himself to be a fugitive from justice, recalls how Walter Kelly settled Cedar Grove at the mouth of Kelly's Creek in Kanawha County did the same thing. Rumor was he had killed a man in North Carolina and fled into the wilderness to get away.

Buckhannon was settled by the two Pringle brothers who were army deserters from Fort Pitt. It never pays to trace one's family back too goshawfully far, does it? More of Pocahontas, come tomorrow.

In 1775 these two reached the mouth of Knapps Creek and erected a cabin on the banks of the Greenbrier River. Subsequently they fell out in an argument over religion and one of them moved into a hollow tree.

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EVEN DOCTORS of medicine went to war in those days. One such medicine man was Dr. Cyrus P. Bryan. Folks up around Hillsboro will be able to recall the stories their grandparents told them about this man of mercy. There's where he returned to practice his profession in 1873. Dr. Bryan was a graduate of the Jefferson Medical College in the class of 1855.

During the war Dr. Bryan dropped his civilian practice and served as a soldier alongside his fellow Virginians. He was with the Bath County, Va., Cavalry. He acted as surgeon of the military post at Warm Springs, Va., in the fall and winter of 1862. From July 1, 1863, to April 5, 1865, he sat in the House of Burgesses, the lower house of the Virginia Assembly.

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On the first of July, 1862, this man had to enter the Confederate Army or submit a substitute. For some reason he elected to hire a substitute in his stead. Not all men relish the field, you know. Then it came to pass the substitute law was repealed.

Result of this emergency action of the Confederate government was that, in April, 1864, this man Renick had to go to war in person. This it was that Franklin Andrew Renick found himself two soldiers in one service, Company "E", 14th Virginia Cavalry. So he served until the drums of war ceased to throb and the flags of battle were furled. But fate caught up with him and the real Franklin Andrew Renick was captured as a prisoner of war on Sept. 9, 1864.

He was carted off to Camp Chase, Ohio, where he was confined until March 17, 1865. Then it was that the ravages of disease and starvation compelled him to take the oath of allegiance. He was released and sent home, just about half dead. He saw much of the corruption that obtained in that awful prison. He used to tell how he saw federal government food and medicines that were never allowed to reach their destination. He saw how federal officers could be bribed into letting prisoners escape for a price, or have their exchange expedited just for a handful of silver.

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first places of public worship on the Western Waters.

Just north of Millpoint is Stephens Hole. Here Stephen Sewell, one of the two first residents of Marlinton, wintered in a limestone cave—running water convenient—along in the 1750's. He went to Greenbrier only to lose his hair to the Indians, being murdered on Big Sewell, the mountain which bears his name to this day. My little effort to point a moral fell flat with the Ronceverte ladies as to how such was all one great lesson for Pocahontas people, never to wander from their own fireside, even if it is but a hole in the wall.

There is a local tradition that a paymaster of one Ohio regiment, in the excitement of the Battle of Droop Mountain, absconded with the monthly payroll of his regiment, and hid the money in Stephens Hole until he could come back and safely carry it away. I never could find out how the news leaked out. If that Yankee did hide the money far back in

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Some years ago a most interesting and valuable history reading book came into my hands. In it is recorded something about a carpet-bag governor of a southern state during the reconstruction times; a bad actor, infamous, among other things, for having run off with a monthly payroll of the Ohio regiment for which he was the pay officer. Some of these times, through idle curiosity, I will try to check up to see if the local tale and record of the book can be connected.

Nearby Stephens Hole is the Bridger Mountain. The predominating peaks of Bridger are the Pinnacle and the Swago. Here in the Gap the Bridger boys, James and John, were waylaid and murdered by Indians in 1784. They were on their way from the Bridger home on Greenbrier River to the fort at Millpoint. There is controversy as to the exact year, but I still hold for 1784. I will write a chapter on it some week.

On up the Seneca Trail—the War-

just above the mouth of Swago.

On Droop Mountain is an interesting cranberry bog, with its spagnum moss and interesting plants which like wet feet. The ladies did not care to mess around in the damp much. Also on Droop Mountain is the deposit of Droop standstone, white and fine. I am told this sandstone is peculiar to this region, stretching to Elk Mountain on the north and to Spring Creek Mountain to the south.

On Droop Mountain November 6, 1863, was fought the most important

me now I must be polite to company in the county.

My father said the name Droop was given because the eastern end of this great mountain had the appearance of drooping, or hanging or crouching from the open savannah country of the Big Levels of Greenbrier county. The earliest record of the name I have been able to find is the court records of Botetourt county along about 1775, where reference was made to one Charles Kennison, a juror, who lived beyond Droop Mountain. In that day, the line between Botetourt and Augusta county crossed Greenbrier river just above the mouth of Swago.

mountains on the east and the lofty Back Alleghanies on the west and the north.

Hillsboro nestles in the Little Levels; there John McNeel and the Kennison Brothers settled in the uneasy 1760's; there was established in 1843 the Academy, a preparatory branch of the University of Virginia; there in 1793 was organized Oak Grove Church,—sturdy and strong to this day; there was built during the Revoution the White Pole Meeting House, one of the first places of public worship on the Western Waters.

Just north of Millpoint is Stephens

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The biggest battle of the war in West Virginia was fought at Droop Mountain on Nov. 6, 1863. This

battle resulted in the retreat of the Confederates who were greatly outnumbered in the six-hour struggle. Nowhere between the tide - washed shores of old Virginia and the rock-ribbed regions of the Alleghanies were there to be found more loyal southerners. To this day the county is overwhelmingly Democratic.

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HUGH P. McGLAUGHLIN was born in Highland Co., Va., Aug. 1, 1843. His family moved to Pocahontas when this lad was but nine. Came the Civil War and the 18-year-old enlisted in Co. "I", 25th Virginia Infantry. Throughout the war he served the Confederacy. He was captured and taken first to Point Lookout, and from there to Elmira, N. Y.

He had one brother in the service who was also taken prisoner of war. This unfortunate brother died of scurvy in the Elmira prisoner-of-war camp. He died Nov. 11, 1864. After the war's close, Hugh McGlaughlin came back to his home in the hill country of Pocahontas and went to farming up there close to Huntersville.

WHEN HE WAS 30 years old Daniel A. Stofer moved to Pocahontas. He hailed from Augusta Co., Va., where he was born at

Middlebrook on May 5, 1821. He

THER EARLY COMER to ntas was Jacob Warwick. he lived was the part of ounty that is now included ocahontas. He had a whole f Negro slaves. One slave wn as "Old Ben" and he ran the Warwick farm ng was called the Clover m.

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Capt. D. A. Stofer mustered a company of Confederates at Huntersville and it was subsequently attached to the 31st Virginia Infantry Regiment. The first company of volunteers in Pocahontas was that of Capt. Andrew G. McNeel. It was organized at Little Levels. This was early in the spring of 1861 when the first news of the war was heard in Pocahontas. That first company was disbanded that fall because arms failed to reach them. Arms were shipped from Richmond but were copped off somewhere along the route.

Third company of Pocahontas volunteers to line up was the one commanded by Captain Arbogast of Greenbank, up there where the big astronomical ear is today being erected to listen to the music of the spheres. Arbogast's Company was attached to the 31st Virginia Infantry Regiment. Captain Arbogast seems to have been on the ball and was promoted to major in the regiment. One Pocahontas officer by the name of Lt. H. M. Posgue was killed in action at

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Middlebrook on May 5, 1 signed up for service in t with Mexico and served Gen. Zachary ("Old Rou Ready") Taylor, destined come our 12th President volunteered in 1846 for T ican War service.

When the Civil War b he volunteered in the cau native state of Virginia. his brothers joined the C my, too. One never retur iel A. Stofer was at the r at the right time and commissioned a captain

This intrepid soldier five separate wounds in skirmish, all five wounds flicted in less than one s ute! One wound was in two were in his breast were in his left leg. Whe struck in the left leg bone was broken in tw places. One of the two entered his breast wa